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A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF MARINES TWO AND A HALF YEARS AFTER RECRUIT--ETC (U)

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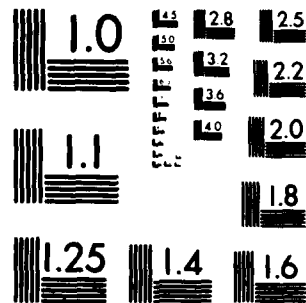
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Report AR-006

A Follow-Up Study of Marines
Two and a Half Years after Recruit Training

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November 20, 1981

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Technical Report

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Summary

A sample of Marines who began recruit training in October 1978 participated in a follow-up study. The subjects completed a questionnaire dealing with their recollections of recruit training, their current assignments, and their plans for the future. At the same time, commanding officers provided information about the subjects' job performance, abilities, and problems. Information provided by the subjects and their commanding officers was related to performance in recruit training and ratings made by drill instructors. The results suggested that the subjects are dedicated Marines who, in general, see their recruit training experiences as having been very valuable, and, in particular, esteem the help they received from their drill instructors. Despite their positive attitudes toward the Marine Corps at the time of study, a high percentage of the subjects do not plan to re-enlist. Unfulfilled needs for personal growth in the areas of education and training seemed to play a role in re-enlistment plans. Drill instructors' ratings correlated significantly with a variety of performance measures 2-1/2 years after recruit training.

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A Follow-Up Study of Marines
Two and a Half Years after Recruit Training

The follow-up study is a valuable type of research investigation because it provides information about relationships over time. In large, complex organizations, follow-up studies can be particularly useful because of the possibility of identifying predictors of later performance. In addition, these investigations can serve to characterize the current attitudes, morale, and beliefs of the subjects studied.

This report describes research on a group of Marines who had originally been studied during recruit training and who were then studied 2 1/2 years after graduation by means of a longitudinal survey. Here we present the first results to emerge from the investigation.

All the subjects successfully completed recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD), San Diego. They had entered the program in October 1978. In conducting the longitudinal study, we examined the following general categories of variables: perceptions of recruit training, attitudes about oneself and the Marine Corps, job satisfaction, current performance, re-enlistment plans, health status, and psychological adjustment. Investigation of these outcome variables grew out of our interest in (a) changes undergone by individuals since recruit training, (b) the effect of recruit training experiences on psychological and performance outcomes during the enlistment period, and (c) the effects of stress-related personality factors on long-term adjustment (cf. Novaco et al. 1979; Sarason et al. 1981).

This report deals primarily with perceptions of recruit training, current performance, job satisfaction, and re-enlistment plans. In considering these enlistment period measures, we also examined their relationship to recruit training performance.

Subjects

The initial sample consisted of 597 recruits (regulars and reservists) from the October, 1978 cohort at MCRD, San Diego. Survey questionnaires were mailed to the 388 regular recruits who graduated in this sample and who were known to still be on active duty at the time of the mailing. The subjects were located through the assistance of Headquarters, Marine Corps.¹ The commanding officers of all the Marine subjects were also surveyed.

The present report is based on the returns from 228 subjects. At the time of the follow-up testing, 10% of the respondents had the rank of PFC, 57.9% were Lance Corporals, 30.6% were Corporals, and 1.4% were Sergeants.

Materials

The subjects were asked to complete the specially prepared Post-Recruit Training Survey. The first page of the Survey presented the rationale of the study and asked for the Marine's cooperation. This page included the following statement:

As a Marine recruit, you participated in this project during recruit training, and we are asking you to now voluntarily participate in the follow-up project. We are interested in finding out about your experiences as a Marine

¹We are indebted to Major Michael Patro, USMC Headquarters, for his help in facilitating this phase of the research.

and how you have personally adjusted to Marine Corps life. If you agree to become a part of the research project, any information that you provide will not become a part of your military record. You will not be identified by name, nor will the information provided by you be divulged without your written authorization to anyone other than to assist in statistical analyses. You are also requested to give consent to the researchers to obtain information from your Marine Corps file and your supervisors about your performance and experiences as a Marine, including your health.

The survey had several sections, including:

- (1) Perceptions of recruit training (five-point rating scales were used);
- (2) Open-ended questions about the recruit experience;
- (3) Ratings of general attitudes toward country, Marine Corps, and self (five-point rating scales);
- (4) Self-descriptive items concerning personal adjustment;
- (5) Ratings of job satisfaction summed across six separate items (five-point rating scales);
- (6) A symptom checklist containing 79 items dealing with physical and psychological problems;
- (7) Ladder ratings reflecting degree of optimism about one's personal life and the state of the world (eleven-point rating scales).

Commanding officers' ratings of the Marines who participated in the study were obtained by a separate questionnaire. The questionnaire's items dealt with the Marines' performance, promotions, conduct marks, proficiency scores, physical fitness test scores, unauthorized absences, and non-judicial punishments. In addition, the supervisor made subjective ratings of the subjects' personal qualities (e.g. motivation, leadership, and military potential).

Method

The subjects were contacted through mailings to their current Commanding Officers, who gave each Marine a packet containing the Post-Recruit Training Survey, which he was asked to fill out and return to the research project. Separate envelopes were provided for the recruit's survey and for the commanding officer's questionnaire. The complete anonymity of each Marine's responses was assured, and he could decline to participate in the study without penalty.

Usable data were obtained for 59% of the subjects to whom questionnaire forms had been sent. In view of the complex procedure involved in mailing surveys all over the world, plus the occurrence of attrition during the follow-up study, this initial return rate seems quite good. Additional efforts are now being made to recontact survey subjects who did not respond so that the return rate can be improved further.

Results

Marines' Attitudes and Recommendations

Table 1 contains responses to five questionnaire items dealing with subjects' recollections of their recruit training experiences. It can be seen that a strong majority of Marines (68.6%) have a positive view of recruit training as preparation for Marine Corps life (Item 1). Most respondents (61.4%) viewed their drill instructors as having been helpful and encouraging (Item 4), whereas other recruits (Item 5) were rated as having been so to a lesser degree (32%).

Responses to five items dealing with morale and motivation show that the subjects' attitudes towards their present lives as Marines are also quite positive (Table 2). Consistent with this positive morale are responses to the question, "How satisfied have you been with life in the Marine Corps?":

Completely satisfied = 6.9%
Fairly satisfied = 58.6%
Slightly satisfied = 24.1%
Not satisfied at all = 10.3%

Thus, a strong majority (65.5%) of the respondents report that they are satisfied with Marine Corps life.

Despite these generally favorable attitudes toward the Marine Corps, the subjects' responses concerning re-enlistment are less than enthusiastic. When asked, "If you had to decide now about re-enlisting, what would you do?", 7.8% said they would certainly re-enlist, 39.8% said they might re-enlist, 22.3% said they were doubtful about re-enlisting, and 30.1% indicated they would certainly not re-enlist. This pattern of responses shows that over half of the Marines surveyed either doubt that they would re-enlist or are sure that they would not re-enlist. Only 7.8% of the subjects have made up their minds to re-enlist. It seems that, despite generally positive attitudes about their military lives, dissatisfactions are sufficiently compelling to influence the Marines' re-enlistment decision-making in a negative direction.

Table 3 summarizes subjects' responses to six items dealing with aspects of job satisfaction. Responses to Items 4, 5, and 6 of Table 3 suggest that organizational factors (bureaucratization, as well as salary) may exert a negative influence on morale and the decision to re-enlist.

In contrast, favorable attitudes are expressed about working conditions and co-workers (Items 1 and 2). Perhaps major contributors to good morale are the rewarding features of individual work settings.

To shed light on the ways in which Marines would like to see their Corps experiences improved, one open-ended question concerning problems and recommendations of subjects was included in the Survey. This question asked: "How could your Marine Corps experience since recruit training have been improved?". Subjects' responses were categorized using a specially devised system. Responses in one of the categories were overwhelmingly more numerous than in any other single category. Almost 23% of the subjects stated that more education and training would have improved their Marine Corps experiences. The next most frequently mentioned needed improvements were more work involving field operations (8.4%) and more responsiveness from supervisors (7.3%). Although items in the other parts of the Survey that specifically mentioned the need for higher pay elicited relatively high rates of response, only 3.5% of the subjects mentioned the need for more pay as a recommended improvement in response to this open-ended item.

Marines' Current Performance and Supervisors' Evaluations

The subjects' commanding officers provided both factual information and subjective evaluations concerning the subjects' performance. Over 27% of the Marines had received at least one meritorious promotion. With regard to disciplinary infractions, approximately 57% had not received a non-judicial punishment, but 26.3% had received one non-judicial punishment, and 16.3% had received two or more non-judicial punishments. With regard

to judicial actions, 5.7% of the subjects had gone through a court-martial. In 8% of the cases, the commanding officers believed that discharge of the Marine should be considered. 24% of the respondents had had at least one unauthorized absence, and 17.8% appeared to have had a drug/alcohol problem.

The supervisors were asked to judge whether or not the subjects were having specific types of problems. Table 4 summarizes these judgments. Disciplinary problems (14.7%) and emotional problems (13.5%) were indicated most frequently, whereas physical problems (7.1%) and relationships with juniors (3.3%) and with peers (7.6%) were checked least frequently. When asked, "Would you recommend this Marine for re-enlistment based on his performance/behavior to date?", 74.4% answered affirmatively, 13.7% answered in the negative, and 11.8% were uncertain.

Factors in Recruit Training and Later Performance

Another purpose of the follow-up was to determine the degree to which recruit training performance correlates with performance later in the enlistment period. During recruit training we had obtained performance data on marksmanship, physical fitness, and military knowledge (oral test and written test). We also obtained ratings by drill instructors of the recruits' motivation, intelligence, cooperation, and overall performance. These ratings by drill instructors on five-point scales were done at graduation.

In the follow-up study, commanding officers supplied information concerning promotions, conduct marks, proficiency marks, marksmanship, and physical fitness, as well as the disciplinary items mentioned earlier. The supervisors also made ratings on five-point scales ("unsatisfactory" to "excellent") for a set of seven performance dimensions.

Our data set included eight recruit training performance measures and 19 post-training variables. Table 5 lists the number of significant correlations of each recruit training variable with the 19 post-training indices. While all of the recruit training variables were correlated with at least a few of the post-training variables, it was evident that the drill instructors' subjective ratings were far and away better predictors of the subjects' subsequent indices of performance than were the various test scores. Table 6 presents the correlations of drill instructors' ratings of recruits' motivation, cooperation, and overall performance with the 19 post-training variables. The greatest number of significant correlations and the coefficients of highest magnitude occur for the drill instructors' ratings of motivation.

All three of the drill instructor ratings whose results are presented in Table 6 showed significant positive correlations with: total number of promotions, latest proficiency marks, average conduct marks, and supervisors' ratings of Marines' military proficiency, appearance, physical fitness, ability to meet the demands of combat, and overall performance. In every case, the highest correlation was obtained for drill instructors' ratings of recruits' motivation. All three of the drill instructor ratings for which results are presented in Table 6 correlated significantly and negatively with the number of non-judicial punishments. These negative correlations indicate that recruits rated unfavorably by drill instructors are more likely than other recruits to receive non-judicial punishments.

In evaluating these results, it is important to bear in mind that, in all likelihood, they represent underestimates of the strength of relationships between predictor and criterion variables. The reason for this

is that the present sample of subjects includes only non-attriters -- that is, Marines whose abilities and motivations are sufficiently high to permit their retention in the Marine Corps. Had all of the cases of attrition up to the time of the follow-up been included in the sample, the sizes of the correlations would probably have been greatly increased. A future Technical Report will deal specifically with this topic.

Discussion

The results of this research suggest a number of conclusions. One is that the sample of Marines studied are dedicated members of the military whose morale is high. They see their recruit training experiences as having been valuable. In particular, they feel esteem and appreciation for their drill instructors for the contributions they made to this first phase of Marine life.

Despite positive current attitudes and favorable recollections of recruit training, a very high percentage of the Marines studied either have doubts about re-enlisting or have already made the decision not to re-enlist. Given the generally favorable view the subjects take of Marine life, their relatively unfavorable attitude towards re-enlistment deserves careful study. The present investigation suggests that unfulfilled needs for personal growth in the areas of education and training are contributing to the high percentage of decisions not to re-enlist. Other clues worthy of further exploration are (1) lack of positive feedback from superiors to Marines concerning work performed in an exemplary fashion and (2) a sense of alienation stimulated by the perceived complexity of and distance from Marine Corps bureaucracy. It is possible that as the Marines studied

approach their final re-enlistment decision points, they will decide to continue their military careers. Further follow-up studies of the subjects would shed light on this possibility.

Drill instructors' ratings of recruits proved to be significantly accurate predictors of recruits' later performance as Marines. This suggests that, by and large, drill instructors are sensitive observers of recruits' strengths and weaknesses. It would be worthwhile to carry out research on individual differences among drill instructors in their ability to predict the future performance of recruits. Such research could be part of a larger topic: the characteristics of the exemplary drill instructor. It would seem that those who are proficient in developing the military skills of recruits may also be proficient in predicting who will become a successful Marine.

Table 1

Marines' Perceptions of Their
Recruit Training Experiences

1. How well did recruit training prepare you for Marine Corps life?

<u>2.4%</u>	<u>6.3</u>	<u>22.7</u>	<u>42.0</u>	<u>26.6</u>
Very Little	A Little	Somewhat	Fairly Much	Very Much

2. Compared to other recruits in your platoon, how well did you do in recruit training?

<u>0.0%</u>	<u>5.3</u>	<u>40.3</u>	<u>39.8</u>	<u>14.6</u>
Much Worse	Worse	Same As	Better	Much Better

3. To what extent was recruit training stressful for you?

<u>9.7%</u>	<u>22.2</u>	<u>39.1</u>	<u>20.3</u>	<u>8.7</u>
Very Little	A Little	Somewhat	Fairly Much	Very Much

4. To what degree did drill instructors help you and encourage you during recruit training?

<u>7.2%</u>	<u>12.6</u>	<u>18.8</u>	<u>35.3</u>	<u>26.1</u>
Very Little	A Little	Somewhat	Fairly Much	Very Much

5. To what degree did other recruits help you and encourage you during recruit training?

<u>17.0%</u>	<u>17.0</u>	<u>34.0</u>	<u>19.9</u>	<u>12.1</u>
Very Little	A Little	Somewhat	Fairly Much	Very Much

Table 2
Questionnaire Items Reflecting Level
of Marines' Morale and Motivation

	Agree			Disagree	
1. It's important for me to be a good Marine.	<u>58%</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
2. My family or friends would not care if I make it through the Marine Corps.	<u>6.8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5.3</u>	<u>10.7</u>	<u>73.3</u>
3. I hope I get a chance to fight for my country.	<u>32.2</u>	<u>16.1</u>	<u>26.3</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>22.4</u>
4. I wish that I hadn't joined the Marines.	<u>11.2</u>	<u>5.4</u>	<u>20.5</u>	<u>14.1</u>	<u>48.8</u>
5. I can make it through the Marine Corps no matter how tough it is.	<u>75.8</u>	<u>11.1</u>	<u>6.3</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>5.3</u>

Table 3
Responses to Items Dealing with
Aspects of Job Satisfaction

On my present job, this is how I feel about:

1. The working conditions	<u>1</u> -8.3%	<u>2</u> -33.7	<u>3</u> -32.2	<u>4</u> -17.6	<u>5</u> -8.3
2. The way my co-workers get along with each other	<u>1</u> -19.5%	<u>2</u> -41.0	<u>3</u> -24.4	<u>4</u> -12.7	<u>5</u> -2.4
3. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	<u>1</u> -26.7%	<u>2</u> -32.0	<u>3</u> -20.4	<u>4</u> -11.7	<u>5</u> -9.2
4. My pay and the amount of work I do	<u>1</u> -5.4%	<u>2</u> -21.0	<u>3</u> -25.4	<u>4</u> -26.8	<u>5</u> -21.5
5. The way military policies are put into practice	<u>1</u> -2.0%	<u>2</u> -13.7	<u>3</u> -32.7	<u>4</u> -28.8	<u>5</u> -22.9
6. The praise I get for doing a good job	<u>1</u> -12.2%	<u>2</u> -31.2	<u>3</u> -24.9	<u>4</u> -20.0	<u>5</u> -11.7

1 = Very satisfied

2 = Satisfied

3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (neutral)

4 = Dissatisfied

5 = Very dissatisfied

Table 4
Percentages of Supervisors' Judgments Concerning
Subjects' Difficulties in Specific Areas

Are there indicators that this Marine is having difficulty in any of the following areas?

	Yes	No
Family	<u>10.6%</u>	<u>89.4%</u>
Financial	<u>11.5</u>	<u>88.5</u>
Emotional	<u>13.5</u>	<u>86.5</u>
Physical	<u>7.1</u>	<u>92.9</u>
Relations with seniors	<u>9.0</u>	<u>91.0</u>
Relations with peers	<u>7.6</u>	<u>92.4</u>
Relations with juniors	<u>3.3</u>	<u>96.7</u>
Disciplinary	<u>14.7</u>	<u>85.3</u>

Table 5
Number of Statistically Significant Correlations of
Recruit Training Variables with 19 Post-Training Indices

<u>Recruit Training Variable</u>	<u>Number of Significant Correlations with Post-Training Indices</u>
1. Rifle range scores	2
2. Physical fitness test scores	5
3. Oral test of military knowledge	4
4. Written test of military knowledge	2
5. Drill instructor rating of recruit's motivation	14
6. Drill instructor rating of recruit's intelligence	3
7. Drill instructor rating of recruit's cooperation	11
8. Drill instructor rating of recruit's overall performance	11

Table 6

Correlations of Drill Instructors' Ratings of Recruits'
 Motivation, Cooperation, and Overall Performance with
 19 Post-Training Indices (N's vary between 155 and 185)

	-----Drill Instructors' Ratings of Recruits'-----		
	<u>Motivation</u>	<u>Cooperation</u>	<u>Overall Performance</u>
Number of Promotions	.23***	.21**	.20**
Latest Conduct Marks			.14*
Latest Proficiency Marks	.19**	.16**	.17**
Average Conduct Marks	.21**	.19**	.18**
Latest Rifle Qualifi- cation Score	.17**	.15*	
Latest Physical Fitness Score			
Non-Judicial Punishments	-.19**	-.19**	-.20**
Unauthorized Absences		-.17**	-.13**
Drug/Alcohol Problems			
Discharge Recommendations			
Military Proficiency	.24***	.20**	.19**
Personal Appearance	.23***		.13*
Physical Fitness	.27***	.20**	.18**
Motivation	.17*		
Cooperation	.21**	.14*	
Leadership	.17**	.13*	
Attitude toward Marine Corps	.18**		
Combat Ability	.18**	.15*	.16*
Overall Performance	.23**	.16*	.16*

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

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Commander in Chief
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Commanding Officer
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Commanding Officer
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